

Weathering the Storm

by et-tu-lj

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Summary: I search for his black shape against the silver-sheeted rain, and hear only the drumbeat of rain. In the space between lightning strikes, he returns. Hiccup, Toothless.

Weathering the Storm

Author's Note: From the phrase "last night's storm" in a fic tree.

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><p>After a rough landing, we find a rock overhang big enough for both of us. I'm soaked to the bone. Shivers rack my body, and I can't think of anything but cold. My teeth chatter so hard I can't talk, and wordless, I curl against him.</p>

He lowers his head to look at me. Raindrops stream off his smooth scales and plink onto the jagged rocks.

Then I sneeze.

He cocks his head, curious, and I want to laugh. It's a new thing to him, and I can read the confusion so clearly in his bottomless eyes. The pooling water reflects another flash of lightning, and his midnight scales show nothing.

I open my mouth to explain, and sneeze again. And again.

His expression shifts. The mirrored eyes blink once, and he turns back to the rain and is gone.

"Wait," I call. "Don't go!" But the thunder eats my words. I stumble after him, splashing through the puddles we have made to look out from the entrance.

Outside, the rain is a shimmering sheet. There is only darkness beyond. Another strike lights up the mountainside, and I see the massive pines bend beneath the storm's assault. There's nothing to indicate which way he's gone, and the thunder clap follows just behind.

I'll never find him.

I collapse against the stone, and stare out into the night. I search for a black shape against the silver-sheeted rain, and find nothing. I listen, and hear only the drumbeat of rain and the crack of thunder.

The wet and worry are overwhelming, and I fall back. The overhang shelters the rocky entrance of a larger cave it seems. I should go deeper, where it's warmer, but I can't bear the thought of him out there alone. I clutch my wet cloak closer, and wait.

In the space between lightning strikes, he returns. The steady curtain of rain over the lip of the overhang splits, a missed beat in the tempo of the storm, and he's back beneath the overhang. There's a clump of pine branches in his mouth, which he drops at my feet.

"Don't do that!" I bury my face against his neck, and throw my arms around his stupid scaly side. "You scared me." My face is wet with more than rain.

I cling to him, breathing in the scent of wild dragon and wet pine, until he bumps his head against my shoulder. I let go. His eyes are pale moons in the dark face, watching me, as he nudges his snout against the pine branches. He goes deeper, dragging the largest branch behind him, and I follow, with the rest.

When we've gone deep enough, I find a dry spot to stack the wet branches. He lowers his head. He snorts and water turns to steam, drying the branches out instantly. I turn my head as he breathes out fire.

With the fire lit, he retreats to the cave wall, claws clicking on the rock. He lifts his wing, and I curl beneath it. Heat seeps through his scales, warming my back, and the fire blazes at my front. His wing curves over me as exhaustion claims me.

When we emerge, the rain has receded. The mountaintop is littered with broken branches and a massive pine lies splintered and charred. I stare at the still-smoldering wood, and wonder how my village has fared. Then my dragon nuzzles his head against my side, and I smile. Whatever last night's storm has destroyed, we will rebuild, together.

End
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